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ABSTRACT

Based on an 18th century poem (actually, a song originally) about the Boston Tea Party, this lesson plan presents activities designed to help students understand that taxation of the American colonists by the British led to the American Revolution; all eras have protest poetry or songs; and students can perform and analyze old literature. The main activity in the lesson involves students in analyzing and discussing the poem. It includes objectives, materials, procedures, adaptations, discussion questions, evaluation methods, extension activities, annotations of suggested readings and web links, vocabulary, and related academic standards and benchmarks addressed in the lesson plan. The lesson plan also contains a description of a video clip related to the lesson, comprehension questions related to the video clip, and answers to those comprehension questions. (RS)

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TITLE OF LESSON PLAN: The American Revolution: Causes

LENGTH OF LESSON: One class period

GRADE LEVEL: 6-8

SUBJECT AREA: U.S. History

CREDIT: Gary Carmichael, social studies teacher, Whitefish, Montana.

OBJECTIVES: Students will understand the following:

1. Taxation of the American colonists by the British led to the revolution.

2. All eras have protest poetry or songs.

3. We can perform and analyze old literature.

MATERIALS:
For this lesson, you will need:

Text of the poem "Revolutionary Tea" (see Procedures)

PROCEDURE:

1. As preparation for this project, students should have a basic understanding of the facts and the meaning of the historical incident we refer to as the Boston Tea Party—especially, an understanding of the tax on the tea exported to the colonies.

2. Tell students they will participate in or analyze a performance of an 18th-century poem (actually, a song originally) and then discuss its meaning and craft. Make the following text (by anonymous authors) available to students as an overhead projection, as photocopies, or by another means.
FYI: Other versions of the text appear in *A Comparative Anthology of Children's Literature* by Mary Ann Nelson and *From Sea to Shining Sea* by Amy Cohn.

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Revolutionary Tea

There was an old lady lived over the sea
And she was an island queen.
Her daughter lived off in a new country
With an ocean of water between.
5 The old lady's pockets were full of gold
But never contented was she,
So she called on her daughter to pay her a tax
Of three pence a pound on her tea,
Of three pence a pound on her tea.

10 "Now, mother, dear mother," the daughter replied,
"I shan't do the thing you ax.
I'm willing to pay a fair price for the tea,
But never the three-penny tax."
"You shall," quoth the mother, and reddened with rage,
15 "For you're my own daughter, you see,
And sure 'tis quite proper the daughter should pay
Her mother a tax on her tea,
Her mother a tax on her tea."

And so the old lady her servant called up
20 And packed off a budget of tea;
And eager for three pence a pound, she put in
Enough for a large family.
She ordered her servant to bring home the tax,
Declaring her child should obey,
25 Or old as she was, and almost full grown,
She'd half whip her life away,
She'd half whip her life away.

The tea was conveyed to the daughter's door,
All down by the ocean's side,
30 And the bouncing girl poured out every pound
In the dark and boiling tide;
And then she called out to the island queen,
"Oh, mother, dear mother," quoth she,
"Your tea you may have when 'tis steeped quite enough
35 But never a tax from me,
But never a tax from me."

3. After reading through the text once for your class, decide if students need definitions for the following words and expressions:

- Line 8, *pence:* British money, roughly considered a penny in the United States but not a totally negligible amount in the 18th century

- Line 11, *shan't:* old contraction for *shall not,* which in 21st-century English usually takes the form *will not*

- Line 14, *quoth:* old form for *quoted* or *said*

- Line 20, *budget of tea:* a quantity for a particular use

- Line 28, *conveyed:* transported

- Line 30, *bouncing:* lively

- Line 31, *boiling:* angry

- Line 34, *'tis:* it is, it's

- Line 34, *when 'tis steeped quite enough:* when the tea leaves have released sufficient flavor into the water

4. Give a small group of students time to plan and rehearse an oral interpretation of "Revolutionary Tea." Teach or review with these students the fundamentals of oral interpretation of literature.

- The group might begin by individually reading the poem silently and then aloud.

- The group must think about and discuss the meaning of the poem as well as its craft: sound (repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme), language (word choice, imagery, figurative language), and form (stanza division).

- Based on initial thoughts about meaning and craft, the group must decide who will read which lines during the presentation. Will only one student read? Two in unison? All in unison? Will the students share the reading by stanza?

- During rehearsals, students should mark up the poem to indicate where to pause, where to place emphasis, where to change tone and pacing.

- Assure students that it is not unusual to make revisions in oral presentation during the rehearsal period.

- The oral presentation cannot just start. One of the students should write and speak an introduction. The student should try to catch the audience's attention with the introduction and be clear where the introduction ends and where the poem itself begins.

- Advise students to stand when they read from their marked-up poems, to speak slowly and clearly enough for the audience to absorb the poem, and occasionally to make eye contact with the audience.

5. After the group performs, begin a whole-class discussion of the poem. One way to begin is to teach or review with students the meaning of *allegory*. According to *English Matters!* (Grolier Education, 2000), an allegory is "a narrative in which the setting, characters, and events represent more than their apparent meanings. That is, you can understand an allegory on more than one level, and the indirect messages are generally more important than the obvious story. You can think of an allegory as a long and complex metaphor in prose, poetry or dramatic form."

6. With a shared definition of *allegory,* students should be ready to tell you what each of the following terms stands for in the context of the Boston Tea Party:

- Old lady; island queen (England)

- Her daughter; the bouncing girl (the colonies)

- Old lady's pockets (the English treasury)

- Her servants (the monarch's emissaries)

7. Proceed to make sure students realize the poem is biased: It is not simply a factual presentation of the two sides involved in the Boston Tea Party but, rather, takes the side of the rebelling colonists by making the "old lady" seem wealthy when, in fact, the British crown was experiencing financial problems. The anonymous writers also make the crown sound horrific ("She'd half whip her life away") and the colonies sound innocent and witty ("bouncing girl"; "when 'tis steeped quite enough")—oversimplified representations.

ADAPTATIONS:

Adaptations for Older Students:
Assign students the task of locating more poems/songs written by the rebelling colonists and of performing oral interpretations of their finds.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you think the actions of the British Parliament affected the colonists? What were the colonists' responses to those actions? Who do you think was more justified in their actions, the colonists or Parliament? Support your answer with specific examples.

2. Debate the decision of General Howe in ordering the British Army to march to Concord to seize munitions. What other choices could General Howe have made?

3. Analyze what effects the Boston Massacre had on the people of the colonies. Explain how this could have contributed to cause the American Revolution.

4. Compare and contrast British soldiers and colonial soldiers. Discuss to what extent their differences or similarities might have had an impact on the outcome of the war.

5. Analyze why some colonists remained loyal to the king while others rebelled against him.

6. Debate the Continental Congress' choice for commander of the army. Based upon his military record, was he the best person for the job?

EVALUATION:

You can evaluate both the oral presentation and the class discussion.

Oral presentation
Use the following three-point rubric:
Three points:expressive reading; lines intelligently divided among group members; voices significantly loud and clear

Two points:less-than-adequate expression in reading; lines well divided; voices adequately loud and clear

One point:inexpressive reading; inadequate division of lines; voices not loud and clear enough

Class discussion
Make notes about students' ability to treat one another respectfully and participate but not monopolize.

EXTENSION:

General Gage vs. Samuel Adams
Have students use a computer program or their general mathematics skills to graph the British army casualties during the battle of Lexington and Concord and the battle of Bunker Hill (see the raw data, below). Then ask students to discuss the statistics from the point of view of one of the following:

- General Gage, British commander-in-chief, who asks the king for more troops

- Samuel Adams, patriot, who urges the king to give the colonists their independence

Give students an opportunity to discuss how the same set of numbers can be used to serve different ends.

Raw data

- Battle of Lexington and Concord involved 1,800 British redcoats; 270 reported wounded, missing, and dead

- Battle of Bunker Hill involved 2,500 British redcoats; 1,000 casualties reported

Maxims
Benjamin Franklin is well known for writing or rewriting common-sense advice and sayings. His perspective on his life and times, as found in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, was popular in his day and remains popular. Students enjoy deciphering the Franklin proverbs. Initiate a class discussion around some or all of the following:

- Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

- Never leave till tomorrow that which you can do today.

- At the working man's house, hunger looks in but dares not enter, for industry pays its debts.

- Light purse, heavy heart.

- Hunger never saw bad bread.

- Great talkers, little doers.

- He that lies down with dogs shall rise up with fleas.

- Men and melons are hard to know.

- He has lost his boots but saved his spurs.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

The Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America
John Mack Faragher, editor, Da Capo Press, 1996
Events in the formation and evolution of the American colonies both long before and immediately preceding the Revolution are covered in this excellent reference resource originally created by the excellent "Facts on File" publishing house.

"A Nation of Minute Men" in The Americans: The Colonial Experience
Daniel J. Boorstin, Random House, 1958
The reknowned historian and former Librarian of Congress authored an authoritative series of our history, *The Americans*. In volume I, "The Colonial Experience," part 13 covers the nature of colonial militia. Within this treatment, chapter 56 titled "The Unprofessional Soldier," pertains directly to the content of this segment. Despite the publication date, the work remains a classic and is easily found in many public and academic libraries.

Rules of Civility: The 110 Precepts that Guided Our First President in War and Peace
George Washington, Free Press, 1997
This publisher has reissued George Washington's own rules that comprise a "book of moral and social precepts that served as a guide to virtue and etiquette for the first president of the U.S." It should offer to students a good insight into the precise components that make (and made) a great leader.

"Franklin, Washington, and the Rod: The Founders in Their Own Time" in Who Were the Founding Fathers? Two Hundred Years of Reinv
Steven H. Jaffe, Henry Holt, 1996
This first chapter would serve high school students as an excellent introduction to historiography (the study of historical method itself). According to the author's introduction, "This book is not a biography of the lives of the founding fathers.... Its aim is to show how people have interpreted and reinterpreted those lives and events." "The Rod" refers to Benjamin Franklin. The chapter reviews the personality traits and social and professional circumstances of each person named that formed the basis for perceptions by both their admirers and detractors.

WEB LINKS:

www.revwar.com
What better way to begin than with a site that covers the entire Revolutionary War (1775-1783) and then offers information about ongoing reenactments? Battles, documents, data on state participation and much more are available here.
http://www.revwar.com

Archiving Early America
See the Revolutionary War through the eyes of those who lived it. The primary sources located at this site make it possible. It even includes directions on how to read 200-year-old documents, along with the portraits, maps, and media of the time.
http://earlyamerica.com/

Historical Text Archive: The U.S. Revolution for Independence
Documents, songs, people, and events are all accessible through this page, since it offers an archive of historical texts.
http://www.msstate.edu/Archives/History/USA/Revolution/rev.html

The Papers of George Washington
This site includes all the available papers and correspondence to and from George Washington. Established in 1969, it is an ongoing project.
http://www.virginia.edu/gwpapers/

Mount Vernon
This site invites teachers and students to learn more about George Washington and his home. Pictures and quizzes are only the beginning. Take a virtual tour of the grounds, and view electronic trading cards about the period.
http://www.mountvernon.org

Battle of Lexington and Concord
In addition to background and a brief history of the battle, this site answers the who, what, when, and where questions very effectively, while also providing charts and maps.
http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Depts/MilSci/BTSI/lexcon/lexcon.html

VOCABULARY:

tax
A charge, usually of money, imposed by authority on persons or property for public purposes.
Context:
The British imposed a tax on the American colonists.

duties
A tax, usually on imports.
Context:
The duties were placed on items imported to the colonies.

militia
A body of citizens organized for military service.
Context:
The militia did not have enough supplies for the siege of Boston.

treason
The offense of attempting to overthrow the government of the state to which the offender owes allegiance or to kill or personally injure the sovereign or the sovereign's family.
Context:
Benedict Arnold committed treason when he betrayed his country.

minuteman
A member of a group of armed men pledged to take the field at a minute's notice during and immediately before the American Revolution.
Context:
The minuteman pledged to be ready to fight in a minute's notice.

debt
A state of owing.
Context:
England was in debt, and for the first time American colonists were expected to help pay Britain's bills.

siege
A military blockade of a city or fortified place to compel it to surrender.
Context:
Outside Boston, Arnold found the newborn American Army laying siege with no siege weapons.

ragamuffin
A person clothed in rags, often disreputable.
Context:
The group that captured Fort Ticonderoga was called a group of ragamuffins by a British officer.

loyalist
One who is or remains loyal especially to a political cause, party, government, or sovereign.
Context:
Benjamin Franklin's son was a loyalist.

redoubt
A small, usually temporary, enclosed defensive work.
Context:
The rebels waited while the enemy neared the redoubt.

seditious
Supporting or taking part in resistance to or insurrection against lawful authority.
Context:
The seditious Samuel Adams was a vocal advocate for independence from the British Empire.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Grade Level: 6-8

Subject Area: U.S. history

Standard: Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary movement, and reasons for the American victory.

Benchmarks:
Understands the major consequences of the Seven Years War (e.g., the English victory, the removal of the French as a power in North America, the reduced need of the colonists for the protection of the mother country).

Understands the events that contributed to the outbreak of the American Revolution and the earliest armed conflict of the Revolutionary War (e.g., opponents and defenders of England's new imperial policy, the idea of "taxation without representation," the battle at Lexington and Concord).

Understands the major developments and chronology of the Revolutionary War and the roles of its political, military, and diplomatic leaders (e.g., George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, Richard Henry Lee).

Understands perspectives of and the roles played in the American Revolution by various groups of people (e.g., men, women, white settlers, free and enslaved African-Americans, and Native Americans).

Understands the United States' relationships with European countries and the contributions of each European power to the outcome of the Revolution (e.g., relations with France, Holland, and Spain; consequences of the Treaty of Paris; Ben Franklin's negotiations with the French).

Understands how political, ideological, and religious ideas joined economic interests to bring about the "shot heard round the world" (e.g., leaders of resistance to imperial policy; the English tax on the colonists to help pay for the Seven Years War; the interests and positions of different economic groups, such as northern merchants, southern rice and tobacco planters, yeoman farmers, and urban artisans).

Understands the strategic elements of the Revolutionary War (e.g., how the Americans won the war against superior British resources, American and British military leaders, major military campaigns).

Understands the creation of the Declaration of Independence (e.g., historical antecedents that contributed to the document, individuals who struggled for independence).

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: U.S. history

Standard: Understands the causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in shaping the revolutionary movement, and reasons for the American victory.

Benchmarks:
Understands the social, political, and religious aspects of the American Revolution (e.g., decisions leading to crisis of revolution; efforts by Parliament and colonies to prevent revolution; ideas of different religions; economic and social differences of loyalists, patriots, and neutrals).

Understands the major political and strategic factors that led to the American victory in the Revolutionary War (e.g., the importance of the Battle of Saratoga, the use of guerilla and conventional warfare, the importance of King's Mountain in defining the war).
Understands the social and economic impact of the Revolutionary War (e.g., problems of financing the war, wartime inflation, hoarding and profiteering; personal impact and economic hardship on families involved in the war).

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: language arts

Standard: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts.

Benchmarks: Understands historical and cultural influences on literary works.

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Video Information and Comprehension Questions

Video Description
The war for American independence began almost by accident, when a single, unidentified shot rang out at Lexington. Examine the decade of conflict that sparked rebellion, as well as the Continental Congress' decision to hire a physically imposing Virginia aristocrat to lead its army.

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Download Comprehension Questions & Answers

The Comprehension Questions are available to download as an RTF file. You can save the file to your desktop and open it in a word processing program.

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TITLE OF VIDEO:

The Revolutionary War: Rebels and Redcoats & An Army of Amateurs

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why can the American Revolution also be called a civil war?

2. What items were taxed by the Stamp Act of 1765?

3. Why did the British march to Concord on April 19, 1775?

4. Why did the Redcoats maintain their formation as they returned to Boston from Concord?

5. Why did the British government need to tax the colonists?

6. Why did Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen attack Fort Ticonderoga?

7. Why did some rebels at the Battle of Bunker Hill have to fire glass, rocks, or nails from their muskets?

8. How did the Continental Congress pay for the army without having the power to tax?

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The Revolutionary War: Rebels and Redcoats & An Army of Amateurs

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. Why can the American Revolution also be called a civil war?
Colonists were divided in their support or lack of support for the movement for independence from Great Britain.

2. What items were taxed by the Stamp Act of 1765?
Every piece of paper, from playing cards to pamphlets, was taxed by the Stamp Act of 1765.

3. Why did the British march to Concord on April 19, 1775?
The British marched to Concord with the intention of seizing and destroying a large stockpile of weapons believed to be kept there.

4. Why did the Redcoats maintain their formation as they returned to Boston from Concord?
According to historians, the British made the only tactical choice they could have—by maintaining their formation, they kept their military capacity intact.

5. Why did the British government need to tax the colonists?
The British government had an enormous debt which was caused by financing the French and Indian War, and Parliament thought the colonies should pay their fair share.

6. Why did Benedict Arnold and Ethan Allen attack Fort Ticonderoga?
Fort Ticonderoga was seized to capture cannons to be used in the siege of Boston.

7. Why did some rebels at the Battle of Bunker Hill have to fire glass, rocks, or nails from their muskets?
As rebels ran out of musket balls, they used whatever was available to fire at the redcoats.

8. How did the Continental Congress pay for the army without having the power to tax?
The Continental Congress invented a currency called continental dollars and issued two million new notes to pay for its expenses, including the army.

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